

## Kemp Homestead Filming Project

In November 2010, filming crews contracted by the BLM Washington Office visited the Socorro Field Office (SFO) to film a historic homestead site on BLM lands in Catron County, New Mexico. The filming was part of the BLM's commemoration of the approaching 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Homestead Act.

Passed in 1862, the Homestead Act allowed settlers to claim up to 160 acres of unoccupied western land if they lived on it for five years while also farming it. At one point, an estimated 10% of the land in the United States was owned through homestead claims. The Homestead Act contributed significantly to westward expansion in the United States, encouraging people to establish footholds well outside the original 13 colonies.



Kemp Homestead, 1918



Kemp Homestead Today

The Catron County homestead belonged to the Kemp family. Ben W. Kemp filed the original homestead claim. He and his father, Ben E. Kemp, had the first well drilling rig in west-central New Mexico. It was horse-powered, and many of the early wells they drilled are still in use today. The drilling of water wells played a critical role in the settlement of the area. Ben W. Kemp was also the sheriff of Catron County for several years during the 1930s.

The Kemps had two homestead claims. The first, now on BLM lands within the Mesita Blanca WSA, was filed in 1910 and relinquished in 1914. In 1914 the Kemps filed on an adjacent property and built a new home. The second home remains in private ownership and is occupied by BLM grazing permittee Bobby McKinley. There is a 40-acre overlap between the two Kemp claims, and it includes the well they drilled in 1910 that is still in use today.

The Socorro Field Office's ongoing archival research and oral history interviews have supplied a wealth of information on the family, their role in the settlement of the area, and intimate details of the triumphs and tragedies in their lives.



Kemp Homestead



The videographer started with general landscape and livestock shots, and then filmed the homestead and associated historic inscriptions.





The film crew interviews Socorro field office archeologist Brenda Wilkinson.



Rancher Bobby McKinley and his new bride Coy



Following the interview with Wilkinson, Rancher Bobby McKinley was interviewed. Mr. McKinley occupies the Kemps' second homestead location.



Jewell Derrick, a descendant of the homesteader family, joined the group for interviews. Jewell's mother, Buelah Kemp Finch, is second from the left in this 1918 photo taken on the front porch of the second Kemp homestead. Her father, Albert Finch, is seated on the steps.





The crew interviewed Jewell and then filmed her with Wilkinson.



Wilkinson showed Derrick photos recently acquired from Derrick's cousin, Paul Zane Kemp, who is Ben W. Kemp's son. Emotions ran high as the two shared photos of the rock homestead during the time of occupation and a love letter from Jewell's grandfather to her grandmother dated 1889.



Ben W. Kemp and cousin John Damron, who built the house while the rest of the family moved from Beaver Creek.